

The Random Jottings of Donald Jay from Nelson in Pendle.

Muttering Yokel

Barton on Irwell - Olde Rock House

In the quiet village of Barton on Irwell, nestled amidst the rolling countryside, there stood an ancient establishment known as the Olde Rock House. This old inn had witnessed the ebb and flow of history, its walls whispering tales of times long past. However, there was one particular story that sent shivers down the spines of those who dared to listen—the legend of the Muttering Yokel.

It was said that during the tumultuous days of the English Civil War, a loyal royalist found himself on the run from Cromwellian soldiers. Desperate to evade capture, he devised a cunning plan. Disguising himself as a simple farmer, he set off on foot through the countryside surrounding Barton on Irwell.

Muttering to himself under his breath, the disguised royalist repeated the phrase, "Now thus, now thus," as if it held some hidden power to ward off danger. With each step, his heart pounded in his chest, aware that discovery could mean imprisonment or worse.

As fate would have it, the Cromwellian pursuers were close behind, their boots thudding on the dirt path. But the quick-thinking royalist managed to stay one step ahead, his disguise fooling the vigilant roundheads. He traversed fields, meandering lanes, and hidden footpaths, always muttering his protective mantra.

Finally, as the sun began to set, the loyalist reached the outskirts of Barton on Irwell. The roundheads, convinced they had lost their quarry, abandoned their search and returned to their camp. The disguised royalist let out a sigh of relief, his ruse having saved his life.

Though the years rolled on and the Civil War became a distant memory, the spirit of the Muttering Yokel lingered. Residents and visitors alike would occasionally catch glimpses of a figure dressed in tattered clothing, wandering the village and muttering to himself.

Some claimed to have seen the specter during twilight hours, as if the ghostly farmer was reenacting his daring escape. Others reported hearing faint whispers carried on the wind, the haunting echo of "Now thus, now thus." The Olde Rock House became the focal point of these paranormal encounters, as if the spirit was drawn to the place where his desperate flight had begun.

Local folklore grew around the legend, and the Muttering Yokel became both a cautionary tale and a source of fascination. Visitors would gather in hushed anticipation, hoping to catch a glimpse of the ghostly figure. Some claimed that witnessing the apparition brought good luck, while others warned of the chill that permeated the air whenever the spirit drew near.

Generations passed, and the legend of the Muttering Yokel continued to captivate the imagination of those who called Barton on Irwell home. The Olde Rock House, now a historic landmark, attracted tourists from far and wide, all eager to experience the spectral presence that haunted its halls.

And so, the Muttering Yokel remained an enigma—a ghostly reminder of a time when loyalty and survival were intertwined. Whether a restless spirit or a figment of imagination, the legend lived on, its ethereal whispers echoing through the ages, forever etched into the fabric of Barton on Irwell's history.

By Donald Jay.